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Memorandum No. 2

November 30, 1962
1:00 - 3:40 p.m.

Measures Against Surprise Attack

The United States:

The Secretary
The Under Secretary
Ambassador Thompson
Mr. Davis, EUR
Mr. Kamman, Interpreter

The Soviet Union:

First Dep. Premier Anastas Mikoyan
Ambassador Dobrynin
Mr. Kornienko, Counselor, Sov. Emb.
Mr. Chistov
Mr. Vinogradov, Interpreter

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The Secretary said that it was our impression that we could make more progress than we have on other things. Referring back to the second point which he had made at the beginning of the conversation, he expressed the view that perhaps measures of surprise attack were something on which we could move. Mr. Mikoyan had expressed alleged Soviet concern about an attack on Cuba and we had shown our concern about missiles in Cuba. Perhaps if certain measures against surprise attack were adopted, these would take care of our mutual concerns.

Mr. Mikoyan said he had had limited experience in diplomatic negotiations. He had had no intention of evading the Secretary's second question; he had not forgotten it. He did want to make clear that Moscow favored denuclearized zones. He referred back to the Soviet proposals made first in 1955, against the danger of war suddenly breaking out. If there were a warning system, this would help for it was impossible to attack without calling up troops, moving rail transports, deploying planes at major airports. If this control existed there could be no surprise attack. Of course, it could be said missiles could be launched and, therefore, they had proposed their abolition in the first stage of disarmament as part of the package plan.

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The Secretary referred to the complexity of general and complete disarmament and said we had been wondering whether it would not be worth while to take some steps now, i.e., pre-stage one. Perhaps this could be characterized as a kindergarten stage. Mr. Mikoyan protested that a kindergarten was for children and we were adults, to which the Secretary responded that perhaps we could borrow something from children.

Mr. Mikoyan said that if he understood the Secretary correctly, the Secretary thought the prospect for general disarmament was dim, perhaps hopeless, and in despondency the Secretary was bringing up separate items.

The Secretary responded he saw the proposal in three kinds of separate steps: First, there was complete and general disarmament, which was filled with complex problems which cut across the entire range of our relationships. Second, there was the ban on nuclear testing and on this we hoped agreement could be reached. Third, there were some steps which might be separated out from the disarmament package. For instance, the Latin American atom free proposal was one of these steps; the agreement on non-transfer of nuclear weapons was another. The Secretary agreed these were not disarmament steps in the strictest meaning of the word, but they were preparatory steps which might lessen tensions and aid to peaceful stability.

Mr. Mikoyan did not make a direct reply to the Secretary and at no time during the rest of the conversation did he refer back to this question.